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IT WAS FUN BUT HARD ON THE PHYSICAL BODY: REFLECTIONS OF THE FIRST-EVER TMI INTERN

by Stefan J. Kasian

During the summer of 1994, we were privileged to have Duke University pre-med student Stefan Kasian as a research assistant in the TMI laboratory. The decision to accept Stefan was made after careful deliberation, and the rewards were rich for all parties to the arrangement. As Stefan continues his formal education, he is also running the Mind-Body Medicine Studies Group at Duke. The group recruits speakers in the forefront of complementary medicine with the purpose of educating and informing undergraduates of alternative approaches in health care.

It has always been one of my dreams to explore the nature of human consciousness and unleash its potential to benefit myself and others. I knew implicitly that in order for this to happen, the mind must be investigated using nontraditional and creative methods rather than the “if we can’t measure it, then it doesn’t exist” approach. Knowing of this intense interest, a good friend recommended that I contact The Monroe Institute.

The response to my inquiry was impressively professional, and the information packet was beautifully assembled. This seemed to be an organization free of dogma or limits and committed to blazing new frontiers. The ideas presented in the brochure sparked my imagination. However, absorption with high school academics and extracurricular interests led me to set the information aside. Years later, I again thought about contacting the Institute. Now a student at Duke University, my studies included computer science, psychology, and pre-med. Experience in laboratory research and with computers were tangibles to offer TMI in exchange for a learning experience. Pre-med studies immersed me in hard sciences. There was a need to temper the sciences with the study of the human being as a multifaceted whole.

In September, I discussed exciting ongoing research with laboratory engineer Dave Wallis. He said that summer employment was not common or feasible because the lab was busy and could accommodate neither transportation nor housing. Regardless, I scheduled a visit in mid-October.

On the drive from Charlottesville, my sweetheart, Emilie, and I fell in love with the vivid fall color and then the beauty of the Institute buildings—secluded, warm, and quiet. I met with F. Holmes (Skip) Atwater, research director, who reviewed my qualifications and goals for summer work. Although uncertain of his needs, he asked me to keep in touch. In January, a letter arrived congratulating me on being accepted as the first intern ever to work at The

Monroe Institute. During the eight-week internship, my position would be computer and research assistant to ongoing projects.

An experienced researcher, Justine Owens, PhD, was hired as a consultant. Her task was to analyze the treasure trove of data collected over years of brainmapping and EEG experiments and prepare it for publication in major journals. My experience was ideal for completing the tasks at hand.

The summer's work was challenging and varied: at times easy and gratifying, at others tedious and frustrating. It entailed weekly treks to the University of Virginia Health Sciences Library to perform computer searches for published literature on such topics as "meditation" and "EEG" for use as references when The Monroe Institute published its findings. Relevant articles were reproduced in hard copy and entered into a professional Reference Manager computer program. I organized the storage and filing system for those references. Ultimately, an individual could choose a topic, such as "consciousness," on the computer, and get a print-out of all articles on file that mention that term. In addition, Skip and I pulled together the results of the BF (binaural frequency) tape series and prepared the data based on similar studies. Using Biolex EEG Brainmapping Software, I printed out EEG profiles, produced graphs of the BF series sound waves, and edited brain-wave data for pieces that did not fit the scale (artifacts caused by an eye blink or sudden movement, for example). The PREP (Personal Resource Exploration Program) database, begun in 1989, contained physiological data on nearly a thousand subjects. These recordings of skin temperature, skin resistance, and voltage changes during the personalized sessions are what Robert Monroe refers to as "the smoke and not the fire." We formatted the five years of data for statistical analysis with computer programs at the University of Virginia and at Stanford, with the help of Dr. Stephen LaBerge. There was a deep feeling of satisfaction when the hundreds of pages of PREP data were on the computer. Then we submitted a sample to Justine and found out that her computer program could not read the data. All of it had to be reformatted by hand all over again! Very quickly I learned that bravery and calm temperament are required when one works with harmless-looking computers.

In late July, it was my pleasure to attend the Institute's annual Professional Seminar. Accomplished professionals from all walks of life convened with one purpose: to share the value and benefits of the Hemi-Sync technology. I met with and interacted with many of the professionals who've helped to nurture and sustain The Monroe Institute.

In appreciation of my service, I was given an opportunity to attend a *GATEWAY VOYAGE*® program. Alongside extraordinary beings from the far reaches of Earth, I explored and developed altered states of consciousness. I immersed myself daily in the Hemi-Sync tones and was transported into the farther reaches of my consciousness. A week of special and deeply personal experiences caused me to reconsider who and what I really am, along the

lines of Bob Monroe's Gateway Affirmation'. "I am more than my physical body...." My transformation was subtle but powerful. The *VOYAGE* was the gift of a lifetime.

Reading books that I borrowed, discussions with staff, observing ongoing experiments—such experiences were “like icing on the cake.” Most of my work was menial and unglamorous, but it had to be done, if not by me, then by Skip or another TMI staff member. Everyone at TMI shares in the work responsibilities with the underlying goal of keeping the Institute and its mission alive and well. I gained important insights into the realities of research and inquiry. Ideas may take minutes to conceive, but the experiment may take days to set up and run, while the collection and analysis of data requires months and months to complete. At best, the analysis of data is tedious and time-consuming. The world of Robert Monroe and the way of Hemi-Sync is no different from any “real-world” endeavor. Success demands hard work and discipline.

Overall I am extremely grateful for my summer at TMI. As a pre-medical student at the crossroads of significant life decisions, this summer interlude was priceless for providing information and experiences that will shape my career. Now that I've seen how I truly am more than my physical body, my career goal is to make a mark on the world by integrating this dimension into the mainstream of medicine.

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